

Bill would increase the number of school counselors, social workers & school psychologists in low-income schools

Whittier, CA -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez, at Whittier Union High School, announced education legislation she has introduced in Congress that will increase the number of school counselors, social workers and psychologists in qualified schools in low-income communities.

“With No Child Left Behind dramatically increasing the pressure on teachers and administrators to improve test scores, often times we forget that students require support in many ways,” said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez. “This bill not only provides important resources to students who need it but also supports counseling professionals and teachers to continue or pursue their careers.”

H.R. 6654, the Increased Student Achievement Through Increased Student Support Act, will authorize grant funding to form partnerships between higher education institutions that train these student support professionals and Local Educational Agencies that serve low-income student populations in both urban and rural communities. The legislation also creates a student loan forgiveness program for individuals who have served five or more consecutive school years as school counselors, school social workers, or school psychologists in similarly qualified low-income schools.

“School Boards across California and the country face similar budget decisions all too often, having to choose between instruction and support services when funding is crunched,” said LAUSD Board Member Yolie Flores Aguilar. “Congresswoman Sánchez’ bill will help resolve this dilemma that is all too common in education funding decisions.”

Congressman Edolphus "Ed" Towns (NY-10), co-sponsored this legislation with Congresswoman Sánchez (CA-39) in the U.S. House of Representatives. A companion bill is being introduced in the Senate by Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), and Thad Cochran (R-MS).

“Counselors and our student support services are the backbone of our instructional program. If our students are busy dealing with social, emotional, or behavioral issues, they cannot focus on the core curriculum our teachers are presenting,” said WUHSD Superintendent Sandy Thorstenson. “On a daily basis, we challenge our students to maximize their learning opportunities and perform at their highest levels. This legislation addresses the critical needs our students have every day, allowing them to hit the high goals we set for them and ensuring they succeed in high school and beyond.”

The legislation has been endorsed by over 20 education and mental health organizations, including the American School Counselor Association, the American Counseling Association, the School Social Work Association of America and the National Association of School Psychologists.